

OT: Bladerunner and Planet of the Apes

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Aug 2001

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Aug 2001, 13:18

Nutria wrote:

Go for it. I'm interested. I found the Disney-Pinocchio twists interesting, but I thought Bladerunner addressed the fundamental issue better.

In light of this year's "Planet of the Apes" fiasco (hey, you all know me, I'm rabidly against remakes--and I was never a huge fan of the Apes franchise, either--so I was quite opposed to seeing this year's PotA, even though I like much of Tim Burton's stuff. But then there was the San Francisco Chronicle's rave review, with little man jumping out of his seat, and a weekend day I simply had to stay out of the house . . .) I have a new wild theory about sf films as a continuum, related to the original "Planet of the Apes" and "Bladerunner."

This is it: PotA comes from a French novel (I read it ages ago), and presumably it is therefore an outgrowth of the experience of the French Empire in 20th century decline (mainly I'm thinking of Algeria, but just for black/white racial tension throw in equatorial possessions, too); the original American film, being American, was taken as a polarization of black/white USA, and PotA tries, however naively/badly, to show that sfnal "otherness" by saying, "well yes, there is racial tension/inequality, but what if the different `races' really were different species?" which unfortunately (complicated themes like this often encompass their opposite) has at least a bit of the obverse: "White supremacists are right: all the non-whites are sub-human."

(John Crowley tangent: which is another thing I have always found shocking about BEASTS--it is a post-PotA work that plays the race card almost as strongly as the new PotA does. And new PotA is cringeworthy in this regard, although as far as the plot goes it is interesting in how it is somewhat closer to the original French novel.)

So there you have PotA.

Then there is another novel, DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? This novel really is the sfnal otherness, where slaves are now androids of initially ambiguous humanity . . . but in the not-exactly-happy end, the ambiguity resolves into "they ain't human" and the "civil rights for androids" card has been used by the androids as a tool to manipulate mentally defective humans.

The movie "Bladerunner" is quite the opposite of its source text, saying "No, androids are just as human as humans--and look, I'm eloping with one right now," and it suddenly seemed to me that it was done this way as a reaction to/apology for the civil rights insensitivity/naivete of the original PotA.

And the new PotA (perhaps reacting to "Bladerunner"?) is vile on the race issue. (It is also horrible wrt space vehicles/space travel, but that's another rant.) A more nuanced approach, after jettisoning all the American phrases (from "separate but equal" through to Rodney King's famed soundbite), might have been to examine how the "apes" all manage to live together when they are not all the same species. Even hire a zoologist consultant: are hybrids possible

(chimp/gorilla, chimp/orangutang, gorilla/orangutang) in real life, and are they sterile like mules? (This would inject a Vancean element.) Explore the "otherness" that is already =there=, for crying out loud!

=mantis=

James Jordan — 21 Aug 2001, 16:27 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mantith ranteth:

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phrases (from "separate but equal" through to Rodney King's famed soundbite), might have been to examine how the "apes" all manage to live together when they are not all the same species.

Hey! Where'd all those other kinds of apes come from? And the horses too? Did I miss something?

Nutria (who probably missed something, or else this flick has a gaping hole in it)